



ORAL FITNESS FACT SHEET

What's Your Dental I.Q.?

See how much you know about the care of your mouth and teeth...

1. In your opinion, which **one** of these is the **most important** method for preventing tooth decay?

- a. Limiting sugary snacks and sweetened drinks
- b. Simply brushing and flossing
- c. Daily use of fluoride toothpaste and fluoridated water
- d. Chewing sugarless gum
- e. Visiting the dentist at least once a year

2. Indicate **how important** you consider the following actions to be in preventing **gum disease**. (Circle one response per statement.)

	<i>Definitely Important</i>	<i>Probably Important</i>	<i>Probably Not Important</i>	<i>Definitely Not Important</i>
a. Seeing a dentist regularly	1	2	3	4
b. Regular brushing and flossing of teeth	1	2	3	4
c. Avoiding between-meal snacks and sweetened drinks	1	2	3	4
d. Using fluoride toothpaste or fluoride mouthwash	1	2	3	4
e. Drinking water with fluoride from early childhood	1	2	3	4

3. In your opinion, which of the following is the main cause of tooth loss in **adults**?

- a. Tooth decay
- b. Gum disease
- c. Injury to the teeth

4. Which of the following best describes the purpose of dental **sealants**?

- a. To prevent gum disease
- b. To prevent tooth decay
- c. To hold dentures in place
- d. To fill cavities
- e. To improve the appearance of teeth

5. Can adults benefit from dental **sealants**? a. Yes b. No

6. Please indicate whether the following statements are **true** or **false**. (Circle one response per statement.)

	<i>True</i>	<i>False</i>
a. Cavities will develop at a certain rate no matter what you do	1	2
b. Most Americans over the age of 65 have lost all of their teeth	1	2
c. Wearing a mouthguard can protect you from sports-related injuries to the mouth and face.	1	2
d. There is no difference in the protection offered by a mouthguard made by a dentist or one bought in a sporting goods store.	1	2
e. Children should use a big loop of toothpaste, as seen on TV, every time they brush	1	2
f. You should always rinse your mouth with water after you brush your teeth	1	2



ANSWERS

1. **c** All of these measures help prevent tooth decay, but research has shown that using **fluoride toothpaste** at least twice a day and drinking fluoridated water are the most important. Brushing offers only minimal protection against tooth decay without the use of fluoridated toothpaste. Seeing a dentist regularly to check for early signs of decay is important also, because tooth decay can be reversed if it is treated with fluoride before it penetrates very deeply. Dental experts regard using dental sealants and avoiding between meal snacks as other key measures in preventing tooth decay.

2. **a & b** Definitely important. Research has shown that regular brushing and flossing removes harmful bacterial plaque and prevents gingivitis (redness and bleeding of the gums around the teeth). Regular dental visits allow your dentist to check the health of your gums so that gum disease can be detected and treated at an early stage, before it has a chance to cause much damage. Regular cleanings by a dental hygienist remove tartar buildup that harbors disease-causing bacteria.

c - e Although important in preventing tooth decay, these are *not* important for the prevention of gum disease. .

3. **b** Gum disease is the most common cause of tooth loss in adults, despite the fact that it is almost entirely preventable.

4. **b** Dental sealants are thin, plastic coatings that are “painted” onto the grooves and pits on the chewing surfaces of teeth to seal out decay.

5. **a** YES! Adult teeth with deep grooves and pits are just as vulnerable to decay as children’s teeth. Dental sealants can help seal out decay.

6. **a** FALSE Thanks to research studies, we now know that tooth decay is caused by a balance of factors that can either be controlled or compensated for. These include: the amount and types of bacteria that live in the mouth, the amount and frequency of sugars and starches that are consumed, hygiene habits, the amount and quality of saliva that a person has, and, most importantly, frequent exposure to small amounts of fluoride.

b FALSE This was true 50 years ago. Today, thanks in large part to community water fluoridation, only 26% of Americans have lost all of their natural teeth.

c TRUE Football and rugby are not the only sports where mouthguards are useful. Studies have shown that about one third of all injuries in basketball involve the mouth area. Blows to the mouth during activities like baseball, gymnastics, volleyball, skateboarding, rollerblading or bicycling can result in cuts to the inside of the lips (from the edges of the teeth), tooth nerve damage, chips, breakage, or even tooth loss.

d FALSE Because a custom-made mouthguard fits more snugly and is better-adapted to the teeth and tissues, it offers better protection than a store-bought mouthguard. For sports that have a very high risk of injury to the mouth, such as boxing, hockey or martial arts, a custom-made mouthguard is the best way to protect yourself.

e FALSE You can get too much of a good thing—no one needs that much toothpaste! Children under age 8 can develop dental fluorosis (a white or brownish mottled discoloration of the teeth) in their developing teeth if they are exposed to too much fluoride. Children under 2 should not have any fluoride toothpaste unless their dentist or other health-care provider considers it appropriate. Children 2 to 6 should brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, but they should not use more than a pea-sized amount. Instead of putting a swipe down the length of the bristles, apply the toothpaste across from side to side. This leaves just the right amount. Parents should supervise their child’s brushing and use of toothpaste until they reach age 6, to make sure that they do not eat the toothpaste or use too much.

f FALSE Do not rinse your mouth after brushing. Spit out the excess toothpaste. Don’t eat or drink anything for at least 30 minutes after you brush so the fluoride will stay on your teeth longer. Fluoride helps repair early stage tooth decay.

Contact your assigned dental clinic if you have any questions or would like to learn more about how to keep your teeth and mouth healthy.



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